

REMARKS

I. Introduction

Claims 8, 10, and 14 to 18 are pending in the present application. In view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, it is respectfully submitted that all of the presently pending claims are allowable, and reconsideration is respectfully requested.

II. Claims 17 and 18

It is initially noted that although the "Office Action Summary" indicates that claims 17 and 18 were rejected, the Final Office Action does not set forth any grounds for the rejection of either of claims 17 and 18. It is respectfully submitted that claims 17 and 18 are allowable for at least the same reasons set forth below with regard to claim 15, from which claims 17 and 18 ultimately depend.

III. Objection to the Drawings

The drawings were objected to under 37 C.F.R. § 1.83(a) for allegedly failing to show every feature of the invention specified in the claims. Although Applicant does not necessarily agree with the merits of this objection, but to facilitate prosecution, claim 8 has been amended herein without prejudice to remove the recitation of "wherein the inflow-side region of the valve sleeve is formed in one piece with a supply pipe," thereby rendering moot this objection. Accordingly, withdrawal of this objection is respectfully requested.

IV. Rejection of Claims 8, 10, and 14 Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e)

Claims 8, 10, and 14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0185555 ("Kobayashi et al."). It is respectfully submitted that Kobayashi et al. does not anticipate these claims for at least the following reasons.

Although Applicant does not necessarily agree with the merits of this rejection, claim 8 has been amended herein without prejudice to recite that **the radial cross section and the wall thickness of the inflow-side region of the valve sleeve are constant from the collar to a location axially beyond the valve needle in a direction opposite the discharge direction of the fuel**. Support for this amendment may be found, for example, at page 4, lines 20 to 23 of the Specification and in Figure 1.

The Final Office Action contends that Kobayashi et al. discloses, referring, e.g., to Figures 8 and 9, a valve needle 7A and a valve sleeve 22. Referring to the “Examiners marked up figure 9” on page 5 of the Final Office Action, the Examiner is considering the portion of element 22 spanning from the bottom of the annular recess 22D to the interface between intermediate portion 22B and upper portion 22C to constitute an inflow side end of a valve sleeve. However, even under the Examiner’s interpretation, the radial cross section and wall thickness of the portion considered by the Examiner to be an inflow-side region are plainly not constant from a collar to a location axially beyond element 7A, which the Examiner considers to be a valve needle. In this regard, it is readily apparent that Kobayashi et al. does not disclose, or even suggest, a valve sleeve wherein **the radial cross section and the wall thickness of the inflow-side region of the valve sleeve are constant from the collar to a location axially beyond the valve needle in a direction opposite the discharge direction of the fuel**, as recited in claim 8.

As indicated above, Kobayashi et al. does not disclose, or even suggest, all of the features of claim 8. As such, it is respectfully submitted that Kobayashi et al. does not anticipate claim 8 or any claim that ultimately depends from claim 8. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

V. Rejection of Claims 15 and 16 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 15 and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over the combination of Kobayashi et al. and U.S. Patent No. 6,382,532 (“French et al.”). It is respectfully submitted that the combination of Kobayashi et al. and French et al. does not render unpatentable claims 15 and 16 for at least the following reasons.

Although Applicant does not necessarily agree with the merits of the present rejection, to facilitate prosecution, claim 15 has been amended herein without prejudice to recite that an outer diameter, a wall thickness and a radial cross section of the valve sleeve decrease between an inflow-side region and a discharge-side region on a collar and that **the radial cross section and the wall thickness of the inflow-side region are constant from the collar to a location axially beyond the valve needle in the intake-side direction**, and the decreased radial cross section and the decreased wall thickness of the discharge-side region are constant from the collar to a discharge-side end of the valve sleeve, the discharge-side end of the valve sleeve disposed axially beyond the valve-closure member. Support for

these amendments may be found, for example, at page 4, lines 8 to 23 of the Specification and in Figure 1.

As indicated above, the Final Office Action contends that Kobayashi et al. discloses, referring, e.g., to Figures 8 and 9, a valve needle 7A and a valve sleeve 22. As further indicated above, the radial cross section and wall thickness of the portion considered by the Examiner to be an inflow-side region are plainly not constant from a collar to a location axially beyond element 7A, which the Examiner considers to be a valve needle. In this regard, it is readily apparent that Kobayashi et al. does not disclose, or even suggest, a valve sleeve wherein the radial cross section and the wall thickness of the inflow-side region of the valve sleeve are constant from the collar to **a location axially beyond the valve needle in the intake-side direction**, as recited in claim 15.

French et al. is not relied upon for showing a valve sleeve wherein the radial cross section and the wall thickness of the inflow-side region of the valve sleeve are constant from the collar to a location axially beyond the valve needle in the intake-side direction, as recited in claim 15. Indeed, French et al. does not disclose, or even suggest this feature.

As indicated above, the combination of Kobayashi et al. and French et al. does not disclose, or even suggest, all of the features of claim 15. As such, it is respectfully submitted that the combination of Kobayashi et al. and French et al. does not render unpatentable claim 15 or any claim that ultimately depends from claim 15. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

VI. Conclusion

It is therefore respectfully submitted that all of the presently pending claims are allowable. All issues raised by the Examiner having been addressed, an early and favorable action on the merits is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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